Assessing you

The First Step in Career Planning

WHAT AM I GOOD AT?

WHAT DO I WANT TO DO?

WHERE DO I START?

alis.alberta.ca

CAREER PLANNING • EDUCATION • JOBS

›› Make the most of your future

Alberta

Assessing You:
The first step in career planning

Career Practitioners and Educators

Assessing You: The first step in career planning (formerly the *Skills Plus Handbook*) addresses the self-assessment phase of the career planning process. It will help your client or students to

- explore their knowledge, skills and abilities that are transferable from one work role to another
- explore personal management skills such as time management, problem solving and organizational skills
- understand how their personal characteristics influence their career decisions
- identify specific work that supports their desired career goals
- identify their resources (personal, material and financial) and determine which are most helpful to their career path
- understand the importance of updating their career portfolio using newly acquired information about themselves
- connect with further information and resources

Catalogue Item #739097

This publication is available to view or order online at alis.alberta.ca/publications.

Additional copies can be ordered from the Learning Resources Centre by telephone at 780-427-5775 or by fax at 780-422-9750.

For copyright information, contact

Alberta Employment and Immigration
Career and Workplace Resources
Telephone: 780-422-1794
Fax: 780-422-5319
E-mail: info@alis.gov.ab.ca

© 1999, 2008 Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

This information was accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at the time of printing. Labour market information and educational programs are subject to change, and you are encouraged to confirm with additional sources of information when making career, education and employment decisions.

All photos in this booklet are for illustrative purposes only. They are not actual photos of any individuals mentioned.

This material may be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for non-commercial purposes. However, Crown copyright is to be acknowledged. It is not to be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for commercial purposes without written permission from the Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration. This publication is not for resale unless licensed with Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration. Every reasonable effort has been made to identify the owners of copyright material reproduced in this publication and to comply with Canadian copyright law. The publisher would welcome any information regarding errors or omissions.

Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration publications may contain or reference publications, trademark, patent or copyright held by third parties ("third party material"), identified with a credit to the source. This does not grant the user a licence or right to that third party material. Users who wish to reproduce any third party material in this publication should seek permission from that third party.

The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

ISBN 978-0-7785-6936-7

Cover printed on 25% post-consumer recycled paper.
Inside printed on 30% post-consumer recycled paper.

01/1999–20M, 07/1999–30M, 03/2000–30M, 02/2001–50M, 04/2003–50M, 09/2005–50M, 10/2008–34M

Table Of Contents

Introduction 3

What Are Your Personal Career Assets? 4

How To Use This Book 4

Is There Retooling Without Reschooling? 5

Mirror, Mirror On The Wall...
Doing A Skills+ Inventory 6

Knowledge, Skills And Abilities 7

Transferable Skills 8

Personal Management Skills 9

Work-Specific Skills 11

Activity #1: Skills Sampler 12

Activity #2: Occupational/Work Profiles 17

Table Of Contents (continued)

Personal Characteristics 19

Temperament 19

Characteristic Approaches And Actions 21

Activity #3: I Know Someone Who... 22

Activity #4: Storytelling 24

Activity #5: Life Influences 26

Resources 27

Unique Life Experiences 28

Educational And Training Activities 28

Support Systems 29

Material Resources 31

Financial Resources 31

Activity #6: Resources And Riches 32

Passion 33

Activity #7: The Loves Of Your Life:
A walk down memory lane 36

Activity #8: Gazing Into The Crystal Ball 39

Activity #9: The Life I Want 40

Repackaging Your Resources 42

Your Career Portfolio 45

Conclusion 47

Personal Assets Summary 48

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Introduction

Finding work and deciding what to do next in your career are complex processes. It takes preparation to thrive, rather than just survive, in these constantly changing times.

That means putting some thought and effort into identifying and recording your personal career assets and keeping your eyes open for different ways to use them. Then, whatever happens in your life or at work, it will be easier for you to navigate your way successfully.

This handbook will help you determine who you are, what you can do and what you want to achieve. Thus prepared, you will be able to quickly take stock of your personal career assets when you face a career decision, see what uses your assets can be put to and apply them to a new line of work or even an entirely new way of working.

> Change and growth take place when a person has risked himself and dares to become involved with experimenting with his or her own life.
>
> —Herbert Otto

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

What Are Your Personal Career Assets?

Ancient wisdom says that four elements (fire, earth, water and air) work together in various combinations to create all things.

Similarly, four elements of your personal career assets can be combined to create many different possibilities:

- knowledge, skills and abilities
- personal characteristics
- resources
- passion

This handbook describes how to identify specific assets within each of these four elements so you can combine them in different ways when you are making career plans or looking for work.

How To Use This Book

Sometimes the hardest question to answer is "What do I want to do (at school, at work, with my life in general)?"

That's why this book includes lots of activities to get you started. Identifying your personal assets can be hard work. No doubt, you'd probably rather spend your time another way. But take heart. Research and experience shows that the effort does pay off! After working through this book, you will

- know what talents you have to offer an employer
- know which areas you need to strengthen
- be more confident in interviews
- have clearer goals
- have expanded your life/work options

Identifying your personal assets takes time—in fact, it's a process that is never really finished. Your assets evolve as you continue to learn and develop new interests, skills and approaches to your life or work.

Be gentle with yourself as you work through the activities in this book! You don't have to complete every activity, and you don't have to finish the activities all at once. A variety of activities are included so you can choose the ones that best fit your way of learning.

This book is for you. Feel free to thumb through it, write in it, make it your own. If you are comfortable doing so, ask others to help you with some of the activities. Friends, co-workers and family members may be able to contribute important insights and ideas.

As you work through activities, you will be asked to record things on separate sheets of paper or electronically (your choice). It's a good idea to transfer the most important information about you to the Personal Assets Summary at the back of the book. Or, you may find it easier to photocopy the Personal Assets Summary (pages 49 to 60) and transfer the information you collect as you go along. Whichever method you choose, be sure that, when you are done, your most significant personal career assets are together in one place.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Identifying your assets is really about knowing and appreciating yourself. So it's little wonder that when you devote time to acknowledging your gifts and talents, you develop a stronger sense of who you are, what you can contribute, and what you need to learn to grow—and that feels good!

Is There Retooling Without Reschooling?

You may be wondering if you need more education or retraining at this point in your career.

The answer to that question depends on what you want, and your current skills, knowledge and circumstances.

It's true that some occupations are closed if you do not possess certain credentials—degrees, diplomas, tickets, licences—that prove you have the skills required to do the job. For example, if you want to practice law or medicine, you must fulfill the requirements set down by those professions. However, there are a variety of ways to get into many other occupations. For example, you don't need a journalism degree to work as a reporter. Competent newspaper writers can come from backgrounds in various liberal arts disciplines—or may never have been to university or college at all.

The reverse is equally true. If you are an experienced reporter, you don't have to limit your career goals to the newspaper world. Those well-honed writing/interviewing/meeting deadlines skills can be transferred to work in advertising, public relations, radio and television or freelance writing, just to name a few possibilities.

Many people have found that their original education and training have little to do with their current occupation. Even in those fields where the relationship seems obvious, the work you actually end up doing has more to do with your lifestyle preferences, valued skills and available opportunities than it does with a long-ago earned forestry degree or carpenter's ticket. There may be a direct relationship with your first job or even your second job but, beyond that, people often discover that the skills they develop and most enjoy using take them in new directions. Someone with a carpentry or forestry background, for example, may continue to work in the same field but move into administration, management, sales, public relations or training.

→ Identifying your assets is not boasting. It's simply looking into the mirror and getting to know yourself.

Mirror, Mirror On The Wall... Doing A Skills+ Inventory

How many of your personal career assets can you identify off the top of your head? If you're like most people, probably only a handful.

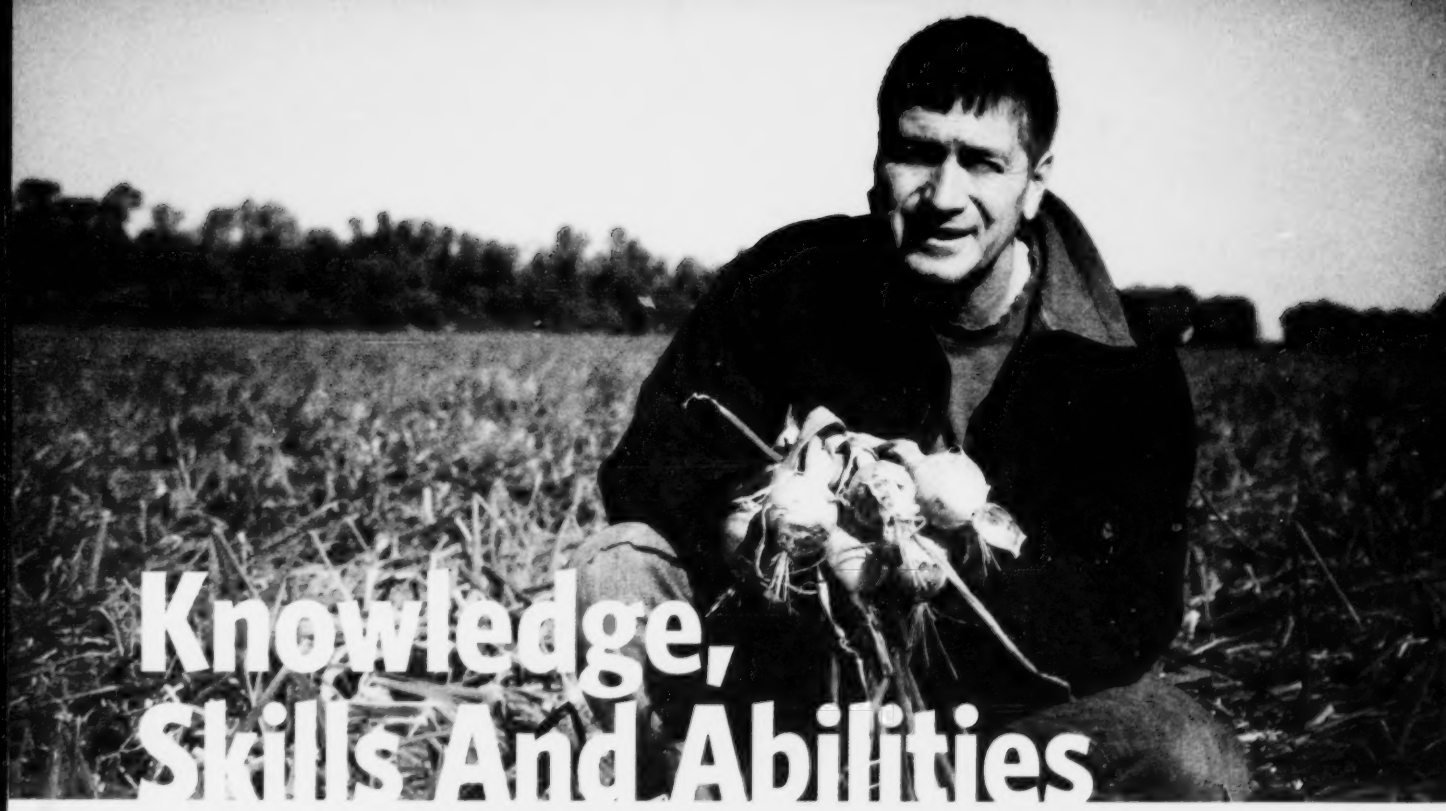
That's because most people don't spend a lot of time analyzing their talents. In fact, we tend to take our talents for granted. We assume that everyone else knows what we know and can do what we can. Of course, that's not true.

The activities in this book are designed to help you put into words what you already know, but might find difficult to put into words when faced with a blank piece of paper.

Be as honest and objective as you can about your assets. In other situations, you may have been discouraged from looking at or talking about your gifts. But identifying your assets is not boasting. It's simply looking into the mirror and getting to know yourself.

Although it would be nice to find a magic mirror that could identify your assets for you, the reality is that you have to do it yourself. So get ready to do some detective work, have some fun and do some thinking. In the following pages, there are many suggestions for learning about yourself. Try lots of activities. Each one will help you to identify different assets.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration



Knowledge, Skills And Abilities

Your answers to the questions "What do I know?" and "What can I do?" describe your knowledge, skills and abilities.

Your *knowledge* assets include both

- the general knowledge you have about subjects such as gardening, national politics, soccer and first aid
- any specialized knowledge you may have that is required to work in a particular occupation (e.g. a physician's knowledge of surgical procedures, a motorcycle mechanic's knowledge of motorcycle parts, an artist's knowledge of the colour wheel or a farmer's knowledge of crops and weather patterns)

No doubt you have acquired a considerable amount of knowledge through experience, as well as through formal education or training. You have also learned a great deal through informal learning activities such as reading, watching DVDs and TV and observing others.

Your *skills* and *abilities* assets describe what you can do. You may know a lot about soccer, but that doesn't necessarily mean you can play soccer well. To become a skilled player, you need athletic ability and practice as well as knowledge of the game.

Your abilities are what you can do naturally. For example, you may have a natural ability for working with numbers, working with people or working with machinery.

Skills are learned. For example, you may be skilled at performing basic arithmetic operations, selling things to people or rebuilding car motors. You may have been born with mechanical ability, but you still have to learn specific skills to become a competent mechanic.

When you are making career decisions, it's often useful to group your skills in three categories: transferable skills, personal management skills and work-specific skills. After reading the following information about each of these different types of skills, you can use Activity #1 and/or Activity #2 to identify your skills, abilities and knowledge assets.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Transferable Skills

Some skills are key skills used in almost any kind of work. They are called transferable skills because they can be used in a variety of settings.

Interpersonal skills, communication skills, computer literacy skills and thinking skills are good examples.

Interpersonal skills are the skills required to work well with other people. If you can work co-operatively as part of a team, are confident enough to voice an opinion, can negotiate with others to reach an agreement, or are good at convincing others that they should think or act in a certain way, you have valuable interpersonal skills.

Communication skills include both verbal and written skills. If you can explain concepts clearly and accurately to individuals or groups of people in person and over the telephone, you have good verbal communication skills. If you can also explain things clearly and accurately in letters, email messages and reports, you have good written communication skills.

Computer literacy refers to your ability to use a computer, an essential skill in today's work world. If you can use a keyboard effectively and use computer programs for word-processing or other applications (e.g. for spreadsheets or presentations), you are computer literate.

Thinking skills are becoming more important as individuals in many different kinds of positions are being asked to take on more responsibilities and work in a variety of situations. To succeed in these positions, you must be able to gather, analyze and apply information, and use good judgment when making decisions.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

→ ...you need to let employers know that you have the personal management skills they are looking for.

Personal Management Skills

Personal management skills are the skills you use every day to manage your life.

They allow you to live in harmony with yourself, your work, your community, and the world in general. They also make it easier for you to adapt to a variety of life situations.

Employers are becoming increasingly aware of how much the success of their businesses depends on finding employees who have good personal management skills. Therefore, when you are looking for work, you need to let employers know that you have the personal management skills they are looking for. And to do that, you have to know which personal management skills you have.

Each of the following types of personal management skills are described here:

- organizational skills
- money management skills
- time management skills
- managing self-as-business skills
- health and lifestyle-related skills

Organizational Skills

No matter what type of work you do, the ability to work in an organized manner makes you more effective. Statistics show that people are working more hours per week than they did a decade ago. To deal with a heavier workload, you need to be well organized, both at work and at home.

Money Management Skills

As the world gets more complex, effective money management skills are becoming more important for the average worker. Effective money management can allow you to work the way you want. Carrying little or no debt and maintaining a good credit rating makes it easier for you to obtain a loan, purchase a house, lease a car and so on. In turn, these assets broaden the range of work options open to you.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

→ Having more things to do and less time to do them in is an increasingly common situation for people.

Time Management Skills

Having more things to do and less time to do them in is an increasingly common situation for people. Managing your time effectively helps you to balance the roles you play in life. It also helps you to meet project deadlines and arrive at appointments on time.

Time management requires setting priorities—deciding what is most important and when it needs to be accomplished. The ability to predict how much time things will take is critical to effective time management. (By the way, being able to say no is an important part of time management too!)

Managing Self-As-Business Skills

Whether you're currently employed, self-employed or looking to be employed, it's to your advantage to view yourself as if you were a business. Then you realize how important it is to market your services and skills, maintain your effectiveness as a worker by finding creative ways to keep learning, and build working relationships and networks with others—both inside and outside your workplace.

Managing yourself as if you were a business also implies that you have a business plan for your career. In other words, you have a clear picture of where you want to take your business, and you keep working toward that goal (there's lots more information about goals later in this handbook).

Health And Lifestyle-Related Skills

How well you take care of yourself can have a big impact on what you are able or willing to do. That's why eating well, exercising and getting enough rest and relaxation are considered personal management skills. Good health is required to manage stress effectively and balance the many different roles you play in life (e.g. student, parent, worker).

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Identify all of your skills, even if you're not an expert. You can decide later if your skill level is adequate for the work you want to do, or if you need to find a way to develop a skill.

Work-Specific Skills

As the name implies, work-specific skills are the specialized skills you need to do particular types of work.

The dentist's ability to do a root canal, the computer programmer's ability to create a database, the warehouse technician's ability to use a forklift are all examples of work-specific skills.

Work-specific skills are usually learned through some form of training—in the classroom or on the job—and through observation and practice. The credits and diplomas we receive for various kinds of education and training certify that we have a certain level of skill. Employers often ask for these paper credentials as proof of specialized competence.

Skill levels are a matter of degree. You don't have to be an expert at something before you can call it a personal career asset. The degree of proficiency you need will depend on the situation in which you want to use the skill.

Example: Jeremy has developed some bookkeeping skills by keeping track of the family budget. He is very conscientious. He gathers receipts, categorizes them according to groceries, rent, etc., and uses a computer program to track income and expenditures. Although he has no formal training in bookkeeping, he has developed the skills and organizational system needed to keep track of the books as part of his role in a home-based business. He would, however, need a greater degree of bookkeeping skill to do the bookkeeping for an organization with a more complicated financial situation.

Work-specific skills may be unique to a particular job, company or industry. They must be updated or changed as the work changes, and as new procedures, technologies or processes are introduced.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Skills Sampler

There are literally thousands of work-specific skills required in the work world. It would be impossible to list them all!

What follows is a list of some of the *more common* skills that can be used in a variety of work settings. They are divided into two groups

- transferable skills
- personal management skills

Use this activity as a starting point, and add other skills to your personal career assets list as you think of them.

Step 1

Read the following list of 103 skills and put a checkmark beside each skill at which you are competent. Competent means that you are able to perform the activity as well as most people (e.g. check off "get along with others" if you can do that as well as most people). You don't have to be an expert at it to check off a skill.

Step 2

Once you have checked off the skills you are competent at, go back and highlight (or circle) the checked skills you really like to use. This way you have a record of the skills you are good at *and* like to use.

Step 3

Now, go back through the skills you have highlighted (the ones you really like to use) and decide which are your top five transferable skills (items 1–71), and which are your top five personal management skills (items 72–103).

Record your top five transferable skills and personal management skills in the Activity #1 section of the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of the book.

Step 4

If you prefer, you can photocopy and cut out each category of skills or each individual skill on the following pages and sort the skills in ways that are more meaningful for you. For example, you could cluster skills according to the ones you need for different work possibilities. Or, you could put the skills you have in one group and the skills you need to acquire in another group.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Transferable Skills

Sense Awareness Skills

1. **Using sound discrimination** - hearing slight differences in sound
2. **Using colour discrimination** - seeing small differences in colours
3. **Using shape discrimination** - seeing small differences in shapes and sizes; observing how things are alike or different
4. **Using depth perception** - accurately judging distance; judging how far away or apart things are

Numerical Skills

5. **Counting** - determining how many items there are in a group
6. **Calculating** - using basic arithmetic: adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing
7. **Measuring** - using tools or equipment to determine length, angle, volume or weight
8. **Estimating** - judging the cost or size of things; predicting the outcome of an arithmetic problem before it is calculated
9. **Budgeting** - planning how you will spend money; deciding what to buy and how much to spend or how to get the work done at the lowest cost
10. **Using numerical reasoning** - understanding how to work with numbers or statistics; knowing how to read data and interpret statistics

Communication Skills

11. **Reading** - getting information from written materials; following written instructions
12. **Writing** - using good grammar to write clear sentences and paragraphs; being able to express yourself/explain things in writing
13. **Talking** - being able to talk to strangers in ordinary settings
14. **Speaking in public** - delivering a speech in front of an audience
15. **Listening** - paying close attention to whatever the other person is saying and responding appropriately
16. **Questioning** - asking the right questions to get useful information from others or to help them gain insight
17. **Explaining** - being careful and clear about what you are telling people about things so they can understand you quickly and easily
18. **Resolving conflicts** - bringing a conflict to a successful conclusion
19. **Persuading** - convincing others to do what you want
20. **Negotiating** - bargaining with others to solve a problem or reach an agreement
21. **Teaching** - instructing others
22. **Chairing meetings** - presiding over a group of people who come together for a purpose; listening, speaking, encouraging discussion, and following an agenda

Interpersonal Skills

23. **Getting along** - demonstrating respect and caring about the feelings of others; being considerate
24. **Using tact** - displaying discretion and diplomacy, particularly in dealing with sensitive issues
25. **Supporting** - helping others with their problems; supporting others' decisions and initiatives
26. **Accepting authority** - being able to work under supervision
27. **Respecting differences** - appreciating diversity; accepting the uniqueness of individuals
28. **Working on a team** - co-operating with others to accomplish a common goal
29. **Stating opinions** - having the confidence and assertiveness to state your views, give your ideas, etc.

Leadership Skills

30. **Making decisions** - choosing a course of action and accepting responsibility for the consequences
31. **Directing/supervising** - overseeing or managing the work of others and accepting responsibility for their performance

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Transferable Skills (continued)

32. **Initiating** - taking the first step; getting things started
33. **Confronting** - telling others things they may not want to hear about their behaviour, habits, etc.
34. **Interviewing** - questioning people to gather information
35. **Planning** - developing projects or ideas through systematic preparation, and deciding in which order and at what time events will occur
36. **Organizing** - co-ordinating the people and resources necessary to put a plan into effect
37. **Coaching** - providing one-on-one or small group assistance to help others achieve a goal
38. **Feedback** - providing individuals with accurate descriptions of their work, behaviour, appearance, etc.

Physical Skills

39. **Using your fingers** - being exact when you use your fingers to hold things or move things
40. **Using your hands** - doing accurate and precise work with your hands
41. **Motor co-ordination** - being well co-ordinated when moving different parts of your body
42. **Acting quickly** - doing something fast when necessary
43. **Stamina** - continually doing physically tiring work without becoming exhausted
44. **Strength** - doing heavy work: lifting, pulling or carrying heavy things

Logical Thinking Skills

45. **Problem solving** - identifying a problem; generating alternatives; selecting and seeking a solution
46. **Investigating/researching** - gathering information in an organized way to determine facts or principles
47. **Analyzing** - breaking a problem into its parts so that each part can be examined
48. **Synthesizing** - putting facts and ideas together in new and creative ways; finding new ways to look at problems or do things
49. **Assessing** - accurately estimating or evaluating the nature of a situation or an issue

Helping Skills

50. **Serving** - caring; doing things for others; providing a service when others are in need
51. **Treating/intervening** - relieving a person's physical or psychological problems
52. **Co-operating** - working with others to reach a common goal; working as part of a team to complete a task
53. **Facilitating** - making it easier for others to accomplish a task (e.g., co-ordinating group discussion to help reach a decision)
54. **Advising/counselling** - helping others cope with their personal, emotional, educational and work concerns by providing information and helping them deal with their concerns

Technical Skills

55. **Using computers** - understanding and performing basic computer operations
56. **Operating equipment** - using a variety of tools, machines and communication devices (e.g. photocopiers, fax machines, modems)
57. **Maintaining equipment** - conducting routine maintenance and adjusting equipment to ensure it is working properly
58. **Constructing** - using a variety of tools and resources in building and/or maintenance
59. **Measuring** - using devices to ensure that the exact size or capacity is achieved according to defined standards
60. **Troubleshooting** - assessing and identifying malfunctions; making necessary repairs

Creative Capabilities

61. **Creating/inventing** - coming up with new ideas or ways of doing things
62. **Designing/displaying** - dealing creatively with spaces, products, objects, colours or images

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Personal Management Skills

63. **Improvising/ experimenting/adapting** - making changes or modifications to get the job done; finding new and creative ways to accomplish tasks

64. **Performing/entertaining** - using your talents to hold the attention of an audience, either in a live performance or on camera

65. **Drawing/painting/ sculpting** - conveying feelings or thoughts through works of art in a variety of media

66. **Writing/playwriting/ composing** - creating original material to entertain, educate or amuse

Organization Skills

67. **Managing information** - maintaining records of inventory, budgets or other data

68. **Filing** - sorting information into an organized system

69. **Following** - taking direction and completing assigned tasks

70. **Scheduling** - keeping track of projects, timetables, itineraries, etc.

71. **Co-ordinating** - mobilizing people and/or materials in an orderly manner

Time Management Approaches

72. **Determining priorities** - assessing activities and doing what is important first

73. **Scheduling** - predicting how much time things will take; setting time frames for activities

74. **Recording** - using planners such as calendars and appointment books to keep track of activities

75. **Assessing** - reviewing how time has been used and making changes that will increase efficiency

76. **Adjusting** - revising your schedule to accommodate changes and unexpected events

77. **Being timely** - completing work on time/meeting project deadlines; arriving at class, meetings, appointments on time; responding to correspondence, messages, etc. in a reasonable amount of time

Money Management

78. **Setting goals** - deciding how you want to manage your money (e.g. pay off credit cards at the end of each month)

79. **Knowing your financial resources** - knowing your financial assets and debts

80. **Knowing monthly income and expenses** - including the basics, small purchases, and larger long-term purchases

81. **Planning** - developing a budget tailored to your life and work situation

82. **Implementing** - following your budget

83. **Adjusting** - making changes to your budget if required

84. **Anticipating** - predicting possible future needs (e.g. low income some months, possible emergencies, retirement) and saving/ investing money accordingly

Organizational Skills

85. **Organizing your work site** - keeping your work area neat and clean; taking care of tools, materials and equipment

86. **Organizing home activities** - efficiently planning and preparing meals, doing household chores, arranging child care, etc.

87. **Organizing information** - keeping files, binders of information

Self-As-Business Skills

88. **Assessing quality** - determining the merit or worth of work you are performing

89. **Adapting** - adjusting to life/work changes and being prepared for the unexpected

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Personal Management Skills (continued)

90. **Risk taking** - taking chances based on your assessment of a situation; making decisions and taking action when you are not sure what the outcome will be
91. **Learning** - using a variety of methods and techniques to acquire needed skills, knowledge and attitudes
92. **Building relationships** - developing and participating in a variety of associations with others, inside and outside the workplace
93. **Collaborating** - co-operating with others inside and outside the workplace to achieve shared outcomes
94. **Visioning** - imagining or forming a mental image of something and determining the steps required to move toward it
95. **Personal marketing** - presenting your assets in ways that will enhance your work and/or your ability to obtain work
96. **Tracking trends** - using a number of information sources to follow changes that will affect your life/work

Health And Lifestyle Considerations

97. **Managing stress** - knowing the causes of personal stress and coping with demands and pressures in your life
98. **Exercising** - being physically active on a regular basis
99. **Maintaining a proper diet** - eating well and drinking lots of water
100. **Sleeping** - getting to bed early enough and getting the sleep you need for physical and mental renewal
101. **Balancing** - balancing the amount of time you spend on all the roles in your life (e.g., work, leisure, parenting)
102. **Relaxing** - spending at least 20 minutes each day relaxing, deep breathing, meditating, etc.
103. **Managing addictions** - admitting to any addictions you have and getting help or treatment

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Occupational/Work Profiles

One way to identify your knowledge, skills and abilities is to find out what knowledge, skills and abilities are required for various roles that interest you, and ask yourself if you have them.

You can find out what knowledge, skills and abilities are required for different work roles by

- reading work profiles
- reading related articles in newspapers and magazines, and on the Internet
- interviewing people who work in a field you'd like to learn about

Step 1

Read work profiles. A work profile is a description of a particular work role (e.g. an occupational profile or job description). Sometimes the government, industry groups or individual employers create profiles or word pictures of work roles. For example, Alberta Employment and Immigration produces more than 530 *Occupational Profiles*, which are available in Alberta Employment and Immigration service centres and at **alis.alberta.ca/occinfo** on the Internet. Individual profiles are also available directly from the Alberta Career Information Hotline (1-800-661-3753 in Alberta and 780-422-4266 in Edmonton).

To identify your skills and abilities, gather some work profiles of occupations that interest you and read them. As you read

- circle the personal assets you already have
- put a star beside any traits you may need or want to acquire

NOTE: Because many work roles are changing so rapidly, the information in a printed profile may be outdated. Try to use the most recent versions available.

Step 2

Read related articles. Because they are published frequently, magazines and newspapers may contain more current information than books or profiles. Scan through papers and magazines on a regular basis. Many articles are also posted on the Internet. Regularly reading through resources such as these will help you to become more aware of the knowledge and skills that are required in a number of work roles in our changing world. Reading these materials is also a good way to stay current regarding social, educational and economic trends—which can be an asset in itself.

Don't forget to read job ads too. They will give you an idea of what assets employers are looking for. Reading ads also helps you to determine which assets you already have and which assets you need to acquire.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Step 3

Interview people. Interviewing skilled and knowledgeable people who are employed in a work role that interests you is a great way to gather information. When you talk to people, you often get a different type of information than you find in a work profile or role description. For example, you can find out about the pros and cons of the work and ask questions about issues of particular concern to you.

When you meet people socially or through other activities, make it a habit to ask them about their work. Weave questions into the conversation that help you to gather information about their

- required knowledge, skills and abilities
- personal management approach

When gathering information, enter into meaningful conversations. Don't just ask questions. Be prepared to answer other people's questions and provide information about yourself too.

For lots of tips and helpful information about this type of research, see Alberta Employment and Immigration's booklet *Finding Out*. It's full of suggestions about how to get the information you need to make the choices you want. It even includes scripts you can use in different situations (e.g. when you are leaving a voice mail message). This publication is available to download or order online at **alis.alberta.ca/publications**. For additional information, see the tip sheet Information Interviewing for Career Options, available at **alis.alberta.ca/tips**.

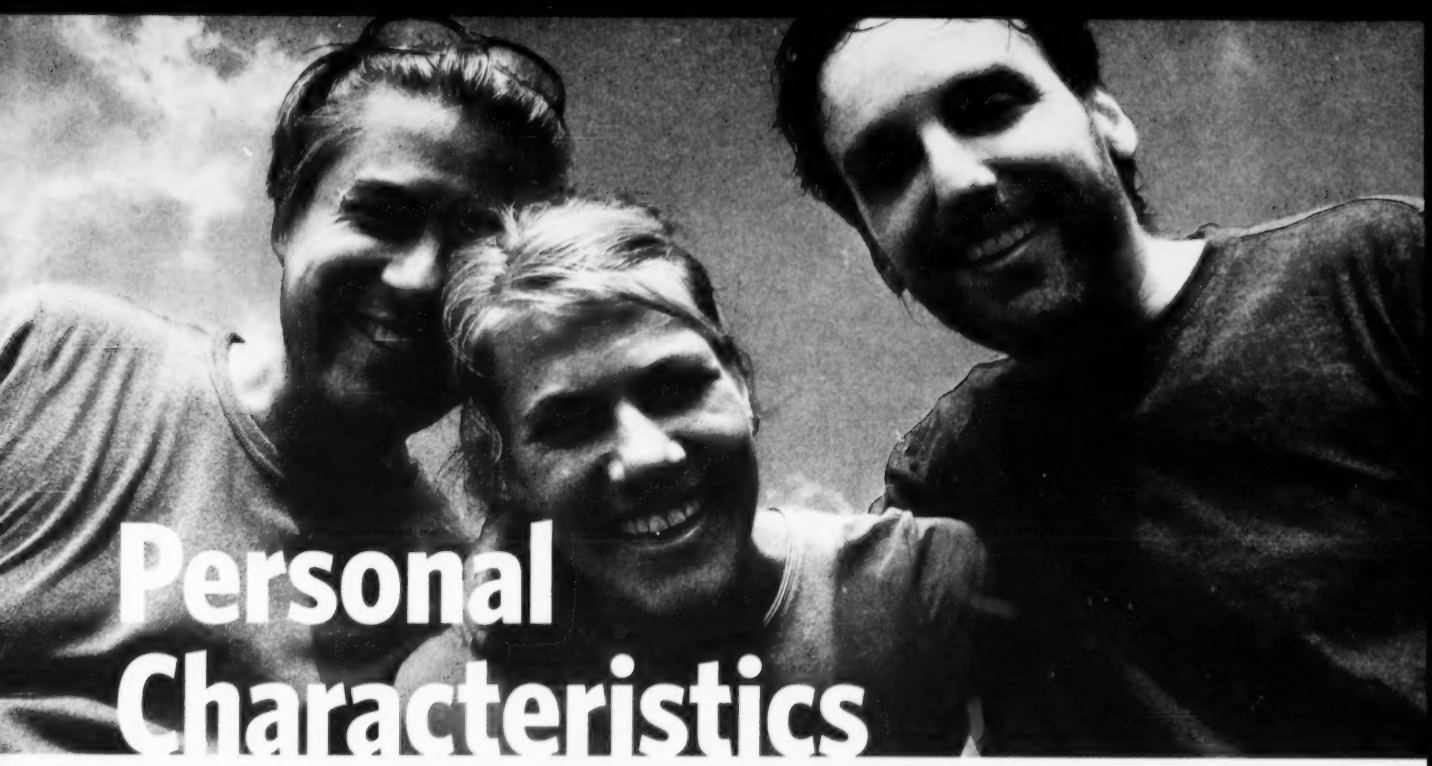
Step 4

In the Activity #2 section of the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of this book, summarize the information you've gathered in this activity. Record the top five

- knowledge, skills and abilities you already have
- knowledge, skills and abilities you would like to acquire

The information you record will vary for each type of occupation or work role you're interested in pursuing. That's why Activity #2 in the Personal Assets Summary has two identical sections. If you are considering more than two occupations, photocopy as many more sections as you need.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration



Personal Characteristics

Give two people the same task and they are likely to complete it in different ways.

That's partly due to differences in personal characteristics. Understanding your personal characteristics gives you greater insight into the kinds of work and work environments in which you will be happiest and therefore the most successful.

Two particular aspects of your personal characteristics are described in this chapter:

- temperament
- characteristic approaches and actions

To learn about your own temperament, and characteristic approaches and actions, read and apply the following information to what you already know about yourself, and complete Activities #3, #4 and/or #5.

Temperament

Your temperament is your nature, your disposition, your personality.

It's called lots of different names. Like a beautifully cut gemstone, it has many sides. Each contributes to its beauty.

Some common sayings reflect the idea of temperament. "*Still waters run deep*" refers to the insight that quiet, reflective people often have. "*She has a gentle disposition*" describes a way of acting toward others.

Many people who study human development believe that each of us has a natural temperament or *preference* for acting or thinking a certain way. For example, when you sign your name with your preferred hand (the hand you normally write with), the activity feels natural, comfortable and easy.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

→ People do their best work and feel energized when their work supports and takes advantage of their natural tendencies.

If you sign your name with your other (non-preferred) hand, you probably find the experience unnatural, awkward and difficult. Similarly, temperament is your way of acting in life that feels comfortable and natural.

We often characterize temperament in terms of opposing tendencies. For example, you may think of yourself as

- a ***big picture person*** who is visionary, future-oriented and imaginative, or
- a ***detail person*** who prefers to focus on one thing at a time, is oriented toward the present, and prefers to work in a step-by-step fashion

Or, you may think of yourself as

- a ***thinker*** who is able to look inward, ponder things and find creative answers to the questions life holds, or
- a ***doer*** who is good at putting thought into action and getting things done

Although we are rarely all one way and never the other, it is sometimes useful to ask yourself if you usually tend to be more one way than the other. But don't be judgmental about your preferences and tendencies. One type of temperament is not better or worse than another—your temperament cannot be right or wrong. It's simply your natural approach to life, your inclination to be a certain way. Each temperament has its own strengths and weaknesses. We need people with all kinds of temperaments to provide balance in a healthy society.

There are two important advantages to exploring your temperament in an honest and accepting way:

- It improves your ability to recognize which work opportunities will be best *for you*. People do their best work and feel energized when their work supports and takes advantage of their natural tendencies. You need to know what your natural tendencies are to be able to recognize where they will be put to best use.
- You can recognize the weaknesses associated with your temperament and deliberately work to offset them. For example, if you know you tend to be a detail person, you may look for ways to develop your ability to keep the big picture in mind. You might choose to work with big picture people, or deliberately step back from your work periodically to examine the whole forest instead of individual trees. Likewise, if you know you tend to be a big picture person, you may look for ways to develop your ability to pay attention to details (so you don't run into a tree while you are looking at the forest). You might choose to work with detail people, or consciously try to be more focused on what's happening right now.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Characteristic Approaches And Actions

Your personal characteristics include the way you usually approach situations and act.

For example, you may typically be

- dependable
- flexible and adaptable
- honest
- patient
- optimistic (see the potential in situations)
- a risk-taker

Your characteristic approaches and actions are closely related to the attitudes you generally display toward tasks or people at the work site (sometimes called your *workability attitudes*). An increasing number of employers are recognizing that finding a person with the right attitudes is just as important to achieving their bottom line as finding a person with the right skills.

You can learn about your personal characteristics in a number of different ways. They don't always have to be *serious* ways. Even magazine quizzes, horoscopes and the like provide opportunities to read about personal characteristics and give you the opportunity to assess whether they apply to you or not.

Some people like to take tests or personality inventories. While they can help, tests can only provide general information. They can't tell you what would be right for you—only you can decide that.

The following activities are designed to help you examine your temperament, and identify your characteristic approaches and actions.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity 3

I Know Someone Who...

Step 1

Think of a person you really respect—someone who has a number of qualities you admire. It may be someone you know personally, or it could be a public figure or role model.

Step 2

In the left-hand column of the chart on page 23, list the qualities you admire in this person.

Step 3

Read through your list and put a check mark in the middle column next to any characteristics you share with this person. Put a star beside those qualities you would like to develop or enhance in yourself.

Step 4

In the right-hand column, describe why and how you would like to develop the qualities you have starred.

If you run out of characteristics you admire in one person before you have finished the chart, choose another person and continue the exercise.

Step 5

Summarize the most important qualities you have and the qualities you would like to develop by completing the Activity #3 section in the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of this book.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Example: Here is how one person described her friend, Alana, and filled out the chart.

The person's name: Alana

Alana's Qualities		Qualities To Develop
Outgoing personality. Talks easily with people.	☆	I'm usually shy and quiet around people. I'd like to learn to talk more easily with others.
Thoughtful. Always doing things for others.	✓	
Organized.	☆	I'm less organized than I would like to be. I often have great ideas, but don't always seem to be organized enough to get things done.
Speaks mind truthfully, but with consideration.	✓	
Dependable. Always there to lend a helping hand when needed.	✓	

The person's name: _____

Qualities		Qualities To Develop

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Storytelling

Step 1

Think of several (three to five) stories that describe events in your life in which

- you made a difference
- you did something that gave you a sense of satisfaction
- you did something you really enjoyed

The events you describe do not have to be important to anyone but you. For example, you may be proud of the fact that you learned how to use a computer program, or that you designed and made something for your home, or that you were there to help and comfort a friend when needed.

Step 2

Write your stories down or record them electronically. Each story should be at least a page long—include as many details as you can about what you did, why you did it and why it made you feel good.

Step 3

Review your stories, looking for clues about the type of person you are. Ask friends or family members to read your stories and see if they can come up with more insights. Or, ask them to tell their own stories about you.

In each of your stories, look for clues about your personal characteristics. For example, were you... a positive thinker, co-operative, courteous, dependable/reliable, persistent, respectful of others, a learner, courageous, a risk-taker, a good self-manager, flexible/adaptable, friendly, cheerful, honest, loyal, sensitive, curious, responsible, open-minded, punctual, tolerant, sincere, tactful, self-directed...?

1. Make a list of the personal characteristics you demonstrated.
2. Review the activities in each story to identify any knowledge, skills and abilities you had to use. First, identify the experience. Then, list the tasks required. Finally, think about the knowledge, skills and abilities you needed to carry out those tasks. The example on page 25 may help to get you started.

   Add any important skills, knowledge and abilities not already listed to the Activity #1 section of the Personal Assets Summary at the back of this book.
3. Identify any interests your stories may indicate. For example, did you display an interest in building, gardening, working with animals or organizing social events?
4. Identify any values or beliefs that become apparent as you re-read your stories. For example, do you value honesty in others and believe that it is important for you to be honest? Do you value independence, creativity, orderliness, recognition, friendship, having authority, status, beauty, money, stability, excitement, time, freedom, knowledge, variety, challenge, adventure, competition, security, helping others, belonging to a group...?

Step 4

Review your notes and pick out your top five personal characteristics (e.g. creative, determined, detailed).

Record your top five personal characteristics in the table for Activity #4 in the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of this book.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Experience: Felt good about learning a new computer program

Tasks	Knowledge, Skills & Abilities
Set aside an hour each day. Read computer workbook in step-by-step manner. Completed exercises in the workbook. Called computer support line when uncertain about a procedure.	Computer literacy skills: competent with intermediate word-processing, including basic design layout. Time management approaches: scheduled priorities. Learning skills: disciplined, self-directed learner; able to follow written instructions.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Life Influences

A career development practitioner by the name of John Krumboltz has identified a number of factors that affect our personal characteristics, including our

- gender
- ethnic/cultural background
- surrounding conditions
- learning experiences

By thinking about how these factors have influenced us, we can gain some insight into personal characteristics that can be very important assets. For example, a man enrolled in a nursing program or a woman apprenticing as an electrician will probably have to deal with stereotypes associated with their work roles. Characteristics such as determination, perseverance and a strong sense of identity will be very valuable to them.

Step 1

Think about each of the following factors and how they have influenced the development of your personal characteristics. The questions associated with each factor are intended to help get you started—don't let them limit your thinking. Write your thoughts on paper or record them.

Gender. Were you encouraged or discouraged from choosing certain life pathways? How did this affect you? Did it support or take away from your sense of self? Did your experiences make you more determined? More confident in yourself? Did you become adaptable and creative?

Ethnic/cultural/religious background. Are there any special characteristics in your ethnic/cultural/religious background that provide you with a valuable asset? Were some characteristics and attitudes particularly encouraged or discouraged? How does your early training relate to the way you typically approach work situations?

Surrounding conditions. How did your family and community affect your personal characteristics? How did your family and friends support your development? Your life choices? For example, did they teach you to be responsible, dependable, honest, etc., or encourage certain interests?

Has your birth order in your family affected who you have become? For example, if you are the first born, are you more achievement-oriented than your sisters and brothers?

How have the surroundings you grew up in affected you? For example, did you have to leave your community to go to school? If so, did that experience make you more independent and resourceful?

Were there any social or political events that influenced the development of your personality?

Learning experiences. How did your learning environment affect your development? Was school a good experience for you? Did you like to learn? Was your creativity supported or discouraged at school? Were you rewarded for being stable? For taking risks? How do you approach new learning experiences now?

Step 2

Record your most significant insights in the table for Activity #5 in the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of this book.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Resources

Your resources are your wealth and riches—the assets that determine whether or not hoped-for work options are within your reach.

If you are working through this book from front to back, you have already taken a careful look at your knowledge, skills and abilities, and personal characteristics. There is another important category of information about you to consider: your resources. They often get overlooked in books about career building.

Resources include, but are not limited to, your finances and physical resources. They can be grouped as follows:

- unique life experiences
- past and present educational/training activities
- support systems
- material resources
- financial resources

It's difficult to simply list your most important resources because their relevance depends on the work options you are considering. For example, experience coaching your daughter's soccer team would be a definite asset when you are applying for a position as a recreation leader, but may be of little value if you're applying for a position in accounting.

The following sections describe some of the resource assets you may already have and provide some brief suggestions about how you may acquire more. Activity #6 is designed to help you take stock of the resources and riches that are most relevant to your career.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

→ My life has been a tapestry of rich and royal hues.

-Carole King

Unique Life Experiences

When Carole King wrote her song* Tapestry *she was portraying the richness that our experiences bring to our lives.

Each one of us has a unique life path, woven together by the threads of our experiences.

No one else has exactly the same combination of life experiences as you do. You don't have to be a champion, the best at something, to be unique. To excel at something is valuable, a great accomplishment. What we often forget, however, is to appreciate the value of ordinary, less dramatic accomplishments such as taking care of an ailing parent or helping a child raise chickens for a science project.

Sometimes it's important to value even the dark or sad parts of our personal history. Recovering from substance abuse, surviving the loss of work or learning to cope with illness can give you knowledge, wisdom and compassion that others who have not had these life experiences may not have. These experiences can be of value to you, both in your personal life and in your work life.

Educational and Training Activities

More and more employers are looking for skilled, educated employees.

This means that any credentials (certificates, degrees, diplomas) you may have are valuable resources, even if they are not directly related to the type of work you want.

With the need for ongoing learning in our changing world, employers also want to know what other kinds of education and training you have. For example, many workplaces offer on-site training such as computer training or leadership/management training. Or, you may have participated in workshops, conferences or other professional development activities outside of your work.

All of your educational/training experiences should be added to your list of resources. They indicate to potential employers that you have knowledge and skills and are making an effort to keep them up-to-date and learn more.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Support Systems

As much as we might like to see ourselves as being totally independent and self-sufficient, the reality is that we all could use a little help now and then.

We are particularly in need of support when our lives are changing significantly.

Even the most talented and determined people benefit from supportive environments. The more sources of support and information you know *and use*, the better. Different sources may offer emotional support, financial support, or various ways of supporting your learning efforts. For example, you may find it helpful to discuss your dreams and aspirations with people who are understanding and supportive. Or, you may need information about types of work, work opportunities or work search strategies.

You can get various types of support from

- personal sources such as friends and family
- professional sources such as colleagues, classmates, instructors and employers
- community resources such as counsellors, religious leaders and staff in libraries and Alberta Employment and Immigration service centers

Depending on your life circumstances, the sources of support available to you will vary. For example, if you have just moved to a new community, you may not know many people or know where to access community resources. If you live in a small or isolated community, you may have limited access to community services compared to individuals who live in larger, urban centres. However, advances in communications technology are greatly expanding our opportunities to get the support we need, no matter where we live.

> Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family: Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.
>
> —Jane Howard

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Email, distance delivery of education programs, computer bulletin boards, conference calls and video-conferencing are giving us access to support systems and information resources unheard of only a decade ago.

When you are making an education or work transition, building a support system can be an important factor in determining how successfully you make the transition. Support systems are clusters of people who can be helpful to you. Relying on one person (e.g. a partner or parent) to provide all the support you need during a time of transition can put a great deal of strain on your relationship. If nothing else, you need other people to talk to when your primary support has already heard your story at least once!

To build a support system, you need to

- identify the types of information and support you need (financial, educational, emotional)
- list your current supports and resources
- figure out where you can get more of the types of support you need

Example:

Here's how Joseph started working toward his dream, which is to make his living building log homes. Through any profits he makes, Joseph would like to build his own log home in a secluded area.

Joseph didn't have the knowledge and skills required to build a log home, or the information and support he needed to pursue his dream. The following chart outlines the types of support he decided he needed.

Need	Current Resources	Needed Resources
People who believe that I can make a living building log houses	Two close friends	Other log builders who are making a living this way
Information on log building training	Log building magazines advertising courses Advertisement in local paper about log building courses	Additional information on log building training, perhaps from the library, local Alberta Employment and Immigration service centre, the Internet, or an association of log builders Talk to other log builders to see how they learned the skills needed
Potential business partners	No partners now	Need to find business partners

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Material Resources

Many people overlook material resources when they're reviewing their assets.

Yet your material resources can give you options that may not be open to others. For example, owning your own computer allows you to work out of your home. If you want to be self-employed, being on the Internet and having the ability to correspond by email is almost essential.

To work in real estate, you need a vehicle for taking clients to view homes. To create children's clothing, you need access to a sewing machine. You need steel-toed boots and appropriate outdoor clothing if you want to fight forest fires—you get the idea! Sometimes, what you own can allow you to do work that interests you.

Financial Resources

Financial resources are also important.

For example, if you would like to become an entrepreneur, you need access to sufficient capital resources to get started. Or, if you are leaving full-time employment and starting to work on a contract basis, it's a good idea to set some money aside to tide you over as you make the transition.

Your personal financial assets include the money you have in bank accounts, term deposits, and so on. They also include other financial resources such as the equity you have in your dwelling and joint assets (e.g. jointly owned property).

For a complete financial picture, you also have to assess your short-term and long-term debits. Short-term debits include regular payments such as utility bills and outstanding credit card balances. Long-term debits, like mortgage and car loan payments, extend over a time period of more than one year.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Resources And Riches

Identifying your resources arms you with the knowledge you need to pursue the work options that are the most relevant to your background and circumstances.

Step 1

Unique life experiences. List any special life experiences you have had that gave you new knowledge, insight or understanding.

Step 2

Educational/training activities. Record the educational/training activities you have undertaken. Think broadly! Educational/training activities include formal training (e.g. finishing high school, attending college or university) but also include courses, workshops, conferences and on-the-job training.

Step 3

Supports and networks. List the names of people, clubs, associations, organizations and so on that could help you attain the type of educational or work opportunities you want, including

- personal supports (friends and loved ones)
- professional supports (colleagues, associates, former classmates, formal associations)
- community supports (health care or counselling services, child care services, community leagues, libraries, Alberta Employment and Immigration service centres, religious communities)

Step 4

Material resources. Make a list of all the items you own or have access to that could be of value in your career (e.g. computer, fax, cell phone, vehicle, tools, camera, musical instruments).

Step 5

Financial resources. Take stock of your

- assets (bank account balances; investments such as term deposits or stocks; the value of possessions such as vehicles, dwellings, work clothes or other property)
- short-term debits such as regular monthly expenses (e.g. rent, utilities) and credit card payments
- long-term debits such as mortgage, car loan or student loan payments.

Step 6

In the Activity #6 section of the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of the book, record the most important of your assets in the above categories.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Passion

Can you imagine what it would be like to look forward to going to work each day? To work at something you believe in? To get paid for doing things you love to do anyway?

If you have a hard time imagining such a possibility, perhaps it's because you've always thought of work as a chore, something that has to be done. You may even be one of the thousands of people who work at jobs they hate. Fortunately, for all of us, there *is* an alternative—one driven by the power of passion.

Sound too good to be true? Before you dismiss the possibility, read on. There are some things you should know about passion and why it's important to your work.

When you work with passion, you work at what you love to do and what you are well suited to do. Desire, hope, dream, calling—they are all words for passion that point to the importance of doing work that is meaningful to you, work that allows you to express yourself in an authentic way.

Thinking about the things you are passionate about can give you a better understanding of the types of activities you enjoy and the environments in which you would enjoy working. You are far more likely to thrive, not just survive, in your career if you consider these things when you are career building. There are two main reasons for this:

- You are more open to developing new skills and competence when you're already interested in an activity. Without really trying, you will continue to grow and learn, which is a big advantage in today's rapidly changing society.
- Identifying your passions allows you to see the world through a passionate eye. You see work options in relation to what is important and meaningful to you, which improves your chances of being in the right place at the right time. When you know what you want, you are more likely to recognize opportunities that can take you a step closer to achieving your dreams.

Does this mean that, if you don't particularly like your current job, you should go to work tomorrow with the intention of quitting? Probably not—unless you have recently won a lottery!

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

→ Desire, hope, dream, calling — they are all words for passion that point to the importance of doing work that is meaningful to you...

Likely, there is another reality in your life—one that includes responsibilities and obligations (like eating, having a place to live, paying bills, and so on). But don't be too quick to dismiss the idea that it *is* possible to be satisfied with your work. Today's work may be the stepping stone you need to get to tomorrow's work which *will* bring you passion.

You stand to gain a great deal by putting some time and effort into discovering work and work situations that will engage your passion.

- You will look forward to each work day, instead of looking forward to the work day being over. It's easier to work at something you love (or at least like a little bit!) than to work at something you don't like or that compromises your values and beliefs.
- Working with passion reduces your stress levels and optimizes your health. Did you know that one of the best indicators of how long you will live is the degree to which you like your work? If you enjoy your work, you'll probably live a longer, healthier life.
- You will do better quality work, and that will be reflected in your references as well as your job satisfaction. Employees who like their work are more likely to "go the extra mile," provide better service, and do what is needed to complete projects on time.
- Your work will energize you instead of draining you. Working with passion produces excitement and creative energy that continues to motivate you, even in challenging circumstances.

Employers know that when people like their work, they're much more likely to bring added value to the work site. Although passion doesn't guarantee work quality, employees who enjoy their work can have a big impact on

- how efficiently the company runs
- whether or not quality services are delivered on time and customer needs are met
- ultimately, whether the company makes a profit or loses money

No wonder smart employers are looking for people who enjoy their work!

Working with passion has a place outside of the organizational setting too. Many people are turning to self-employment as a work alternative—building their own companies around what they love to do. Often, work that starts out as a hobby, as something we love doing, develops into something more.

When you are identifying your passions, consider what you like to do in both your work life and your leisure time.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

The challenge is to identify those things in life you feel passionate about. An easy way to get started is to ask yourself about your

- interests (the activities you like to do and get excited about)
- values and beliefs
- dreams about the way you would like to live

Activities #7, #8 and #9 are designed to help you look for clues in your past and in your dreams. You may also find some clues in the work you did on Activity #4.

When you become clearer about what your passions are, you can begin to shape your future and set goals that take you closer to what you want to do. Although we'd prefer instant gratification, creating meaningful work is usually a process that unfolds over time. Be patient. Go slowly, always keeping your eyes open for ways to move closer to the life you want. You may even find that, with some creativity, you can change your current work role so it is more in line with your interests.

Once you know what you're passionate about, you need a purpose for your passion—a way to contribute your expertise and services.

Ask yourself

- In what settings can I make a contribution?
- Who will benefit from my contributions?

Try to come up with several answers to these questions. The more options you have, the more adaptable and successful you are likely to be—on your own terms.

Example:

Sandy worked as a federal government public servant. Her work role was to respond to public inquiries about agricultural products and programs. But, with some creative manoeuvering, she was able to expand her role to include more computer work, which she loves to do.

On her own time, Sandy developed a model for a database that would be useful to her as well as to others in the department. Sandy showed her supervisor the database. Her supervisor responded favourably and suggested that Sandy use a portion of her regular work hours to continue developing databases for the department.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

The Loves Of Your Life:

A walk down memory lane

Your past can provide many clues about your passions, so get ready to take a walk down memory lane.

The journey will help you to identify your passions and see how they have influenced your life. You may have forgotten some of your loves because you've become too busy, developed new areas of interest, or just decided not to spend time that way (for whatever reason).

This activity asks you to look back in time. The next activity asks you to use what you learn from this exercise to look forward, into your future.

Step 1

First, divide your past into time periods of about five years each and record those periods in the left-hand column of the table on page 38. Begin wherever you like, but most people have few memories before age five. If you need help, take a look at the example on page 37 to see how Ming, who is 25 years old, chose to do this exercise.

Step 2

For each five-year time period, list your passions (the things that interested you at the time and that you felt strongly about). Think about your leisure time, time spent on education/training, and your work life during each time period. Each category may provide different information about you.

It's important to assess your leisure life as well as education and work life. You may be surprised at how many assets you've gained from your leisure activities that can be applied to a work setting—which means that even if you've never worked for pay, you may have lots of personal assets that make you a valuable worker.

You probably won't be able to fill in all the categories for each time period. For example, you likely weren't working between the ages of five and ten! In those situations, just leave it blank or use N/A to indicate "Not Applicable."

Step 3

Review what you have written. See if there are any themes that recur over time.

One theme in the example Ming's Past is her interest in animals and children, which led her to become a special education teacher in a rural setting. It is also clear that Ming enjoys being with, learning about and working with people. Her preference for socializing could be very useful, now or in the future, in a variety of work situations. For example, the ability to converse easily with people is a useful attribute to have in fields such as sales, education and social work.

You may or may not find themes in your own profile. If you do find themes, they can be a big help in identifying your areas of passion and purpose. If you don't find any themes, don't worry. It simply means you have interests in many areas.

Step 4

Record the insights you've gained from Activity #7 in the space provided on the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of this book.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Example: Ming's Past

Time Frame (age)	Leisure/Recreation	Education	Work
5–10 years	Dance Pets, taking care of dogs Skating Reading	Favorite subjects in school: - language arts - social studies	N/A
11–15 years	Horseback riding Cars, learning to drive Working with individuals who have special needs Reading	Favorite subjects: - language arts - discussions in social studies	Babysitting
16–20 years	Hiking Working with young children Horseback riding Reading	Took special education courses: - liked working with physically challenged individuals - liked psychology courses	Worked as a camp leader: - loved working with kids - loved working outdoors
21–25 years	Spending time in nature Socializing with friends Photography Reading–health and wellness	Continued to be interested in psychology Developed interest in emotional health and wellness	Worked as special education teacher: - loved the children - loved the rural setting - loved the small class size

Time Frame (age)	Leisure/Recreation	Education	Work

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Gazing Into The Crystal Ball

Get ready to gaze into the crystal ball and take a forward look at your life. In the last activity, you took a look at your past, right up to the present. Now you have the opportunity to expand your potential and assess your possibilities by looking to the future.

Step 1

List at least 10 things you would love to do in the future. Put all of your "yes, but" reactions on hold and pretend anything is possible. Your dreams and desires may be simple or grandiose. They can include specific activities such as "learn how to repair a small motor" or more general desires such as "help minimize child poverty." List things even if you don't think they're possible.

For example, Ali's wish list started out this way.

- Be a professional golfer
- Own a 1953 jeep
- Help preserve the environment
- Maintain my health
- Build a kayak

Have fun with this—make your list a long one!

Step 2

Now put your wishes in order of their importance to you. For example, Ali decided the following three items should top his list:

1. Maintain my health
2. Help preserve the environment
3. Build a kayak

Step 3

For each item on your list, ask yourself, "Why is this important to me?" For example, for the item "Become a professional golfer," Ali might ask himself, "What appeals to me about this? Is it the fame? Is it the lifestyle? Is it the mastery of the sport? Is it the potential to teach others about golf?"

Your answers will contain important clues about your passions, the things that motivate you. For example, here are Ali's responses for his top three items.

1. Maintain health. My health will allow me to do all the other things I want. If I'm healthy, I'll have more energy and more opportunities will be available to me.

2. Help preserve the environment. We're doing a lot of damage to the earth. I can see myself enjoying work that helps people and industries to make better use of our natural resources and to minimize impact on the environment.

3. Build a kayak. I'd like to build my own kayak because it would be more affordable than buying one. I'd also like the creative aspect of designing my own boat and the sense of satisfaction that would come with making something myself. Having my own kayak would allow me to spend time paddling with my friends and family—which would help me to maintain my health!

Step 4

Record your top five wishes, and reasons why, in the space for Activity #8 in the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of this book.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

The Life I Want

Vision is imaginative insight, *the ability to see possibilities.*

Many organizations and agencies spend a great deal of time and effort on creating a corporate vision. Why? Because visions show possible futures that can guide the decisions you have to make right now. They are your rationale for setting goals and new life directions.

Like many people, you may have a little voice in your head that says, "Creating a vision is too frivolous. I need something more down to earth, based in reality." What you may not realize is that removing the reality-based roadblocks (for now anyway) allows you to learn things that, ultimately, can shape your future. For example, many people attribute the early success of Disneyland to the company's early think tanks where employees were encouraged to be "imagineers" and allow their visions to grow and take shape.

So for now, give yourself the same right as the early Disney imagineers—the right to imagine the possibilities, the life you would live if you could.

Step 1

Find a comfortable place to think, free from distractions. Use one of the following thoughts to get you going—or use a different strategy of your own.

- Imagine you've just won the lottery. How would you live your life now that there are no financial barriers?
- You just found a magic wand—wave it and the life you desire will appear.
- If you could have the life you wanted just for today, what would it be like?

Step 2

To fill in the details, ask yourself the following questions and write down or tape your answers. Or, make a picture of your preferred life by creating a collage or drawing images that portray the life you want.

Setting

- Where would you live? In a city? In the country? On the prairie? In a forest?
- What type of dwelling would you like to live in? A large house? A log cabin? A condo?
- Would you prefer to stay in one location or would you like to travel?

Work

- What type of work would you do?
- What setting would you like to work in?
- What contributions would you like to make through your work?

Leisure

- How would you spend your time outside of work?
- What recreational activities would you participate in?
- What new things would you like to learn?

Relationships

- Who would you like to spend time with? Family? Friends? Pets? Or, would you prefer to spend more time by yourself?
- What types of activities do you enjoy doing with the people in your life?
- Are there any people you would like to meet if you could?

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Review your work on this activity. Ask yourself, "By imagining my preferred life, what possibilities do I open myself to?"

Then ask yourself, "What are my more immediate needs and goals? What do I need to take me *closer* to my preferred life?" This is the question that links the present to the future.

Review your Personal Assets Summary and identify the assets you currently have. Add any others you may think of that are relevant to your immediate goals and needs, and can move you in the direction of your vision.

Make a list of the assets you will need to acquire to take you closer to your vision. What short-term goals would help you take the next step?

Record the highlights of what you have learned from Activity #9 in the **Personal Assets Summary** at the back of this book.

Keep an eye on your vision

You may not ever fully achieve your vision, and your vision may change over time. However, having a vision helps you to take stock of your current assets, to choose a direction, to decide what's important to you in life. Your vision can broaden your perspective of what's possible and provide hope and motivation even when things don't seem to be going well. In times when the economy or other life circumstances don't seem in your favour, you can still take steps toward your vision. For example, if you want to learn to train horses, but can't afford lessons or to own your own horse, you can still read about horses, watch other people take lessons, attend horse shows, or volunteer to work at an equestrian centre to develop your skill and knowledge base.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Repackaging Your Resources

Career planning has often been presented as a logical, step-by-step process.

You take one step at a time: identify your personal assets, explore clearly identified work roles, choose one and create action plans for achieving that particular goal. You make either/or choices—to be a nurse or a hygienist, a millwright or an electrician, a full-time employee or an entrepreneur.

In today's rapidly changing world, it has become increasingly clear that such a lock-step, inflexible approach to career planning doesn't work for most people. You need to think in a more fluid way, one that allows you to accommodate change as it occurs.

This new approach, sometimes called career building, is also more balanced. It recognizes the role of feelings, intuition, spontaneity and chance in decision making.

This doesn't mean that you should throw away systematic, planned ways of making career decisions. It does mean that the process of identifying your assets and selecting work roles isn't quite as straightforward as once thought.

Career building allows you to consider this option *and* that option, and acknowledges your multiple possibilities (the *many* things you can do in your lifetime). It is a process that allows you to package and repackage your personal assets quickly and in a number of different ways, whenever the need arises.

Career building involves using two basic strategies: meandering and manoeuvering.[1]

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

> What each must seek in his life never was on land or sea. It is something out of his own unique potentiality for experience, something that never has been and never could have been experienced by anyone else.
>
> —Joseph Campbell

Meandering

To meander is to wander, to take an indirect path. In the activities included in this publication, you are encouraged to meander as you explore your personal assets. Instead of simply identifying your current work-related assets, you are asked to explore assets you have gathered in many settings over your lifetime, and explore the world in general for things that look interesting. This process of meandering is extremely important. It is an active process that requires you to look at a variety of work options that might interest you, and to reflect and exchange information with others. Take your time, read the newspaper, watch or listen to the news, see if any interesting ideas pop up.

Meandering opens up a broader range of educational and work opportunities. It allows you to expand your identity and your sense of possible work alternatives.

Manoeuvering

As interesting and necessary as the process of meandering is, there is also a time to manoeuver—a time to recognize opportunities, and to rearrange and package your personal assets in response to those opportunities. To manoeuver is to make a strategic move. It requires being ready to take advantage of opportunities and act decisively. Being ready requires knowing which personal assets you want to use, and how you want to use them.

Many people are surprised to learn that the process of manoeuvering, like meandering, is ongoing. In fact, you can manoeuver on a daily basis. While you are meandering and identifying your personal assets, you can also begin to manoeuver and identify possible work roles that might fit your current personal assets.

Example:

Moe was a plastics and rubber processing machine operator. During the time he was identifying his assets, he read a career planning article that referred to a petroleum and gas process operator.

To determine the degree to which his personal assets would transfer to this new area, he decided to talk to an expert in the field. Moe made a strategic move and found an expert to interview—someone who worked for a firm he would like to join. In doing so, he combined the processes of meandering and manoeuvering.

[1] The terms "meander" and "manoeuver" were first used in this context by L. Bezanson, Executive Director of the Canadian Career Development Foundation.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Repackaging

Manoeuvering includes repackaging personal assets to fit potential educational/work opportunities. It is a process similar to deciding which clothes to wear: you think about the day's anticipated activities and select clothing accordingly. For example, you select different pieces of clothing if you are expecting to play baseball than you would if you were planning to go to a wedding.

To carry the analogy further, let's assume that some of your clothing is outdated and needs to be replaced. Or, you need a specialized piece of clothing or equipment for a new hobby (e.g. scuba diving). Instead of throwing everything away and starting over, you simply add to your current wardrobe.

Some people have very specialized wardrobes; other people have a wider range of clothing in their closets. You may think that the person with the most clothes or the broadest range of clothing would be the most versatile. Wardrobe experts tell us, however, that it's not necessarily the number of clothes you have that makes your wardrobe the most adaptable. Being able to effectively *combine* pieces of clothing by mixing and matching, or by adding a few accessories, can also increase the versatility of your wardrobe.

Your personal assets are like clothes in your wardrobe. You can review what you've got, select assets appropriate for particular work opportunities, and mix and match them to suit different circumstances.

People often fall into the trap of believing that their skills only fit one work role, such as nurse, farmer or musician. However, once they start identifying specific assets, they discover that they are much more adaptable. You can cluster personal career assets in many different ways, which can make it possible for you to qualify for a number of different work roles.

Of course, some work roles require specific training but, too often, people unnecessarily limit what they think they can do. They do not realize that being creative in clustering their assets can open up whole new realms of possibilities.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Whether you are currently considering new options and opportunities or are happily employed or self-employed, it is essential to keep information about your assets organized and readily available.

When you are prepared, you can quickly tailor your resumé and write proposals that demonstrate your strengths and convey your potential.

If you've already worked through the activities in this book, you know that identifying your personal assets takes time and energy. This process gets a lot easier if you have already done it once *and* you add new information to your list of personal assets whenever you acquire it. It's like putting all your treasures in one place, so you can find them when you need them.

One way of keeping track of your assets is to create a personal career portfolio that contains the following material.

1. ***A personal profile.*** A personal profile is a description of your assets, such as the one you have already created if you have filled in the Personal Assets Summary at the back of this book. Your profile should include a description of your knowledge base, skills and abilities, purpose and passion, and personal management approaches.

2. ***Descriptions of your work experiences.*** Include all of your work experiences, from your first job to your current role. Copies of old job descriptions and/or performance evaluations are ideal.

3. ***Descriptions of educational/training experiences and related documents.*** Keep track of your informal training experiences (e.g. training provided by an employer, workshops, seminars, conferences, continuing education courses), as well as certified educational experiences (e.g. certificates/diplomas/degrees).

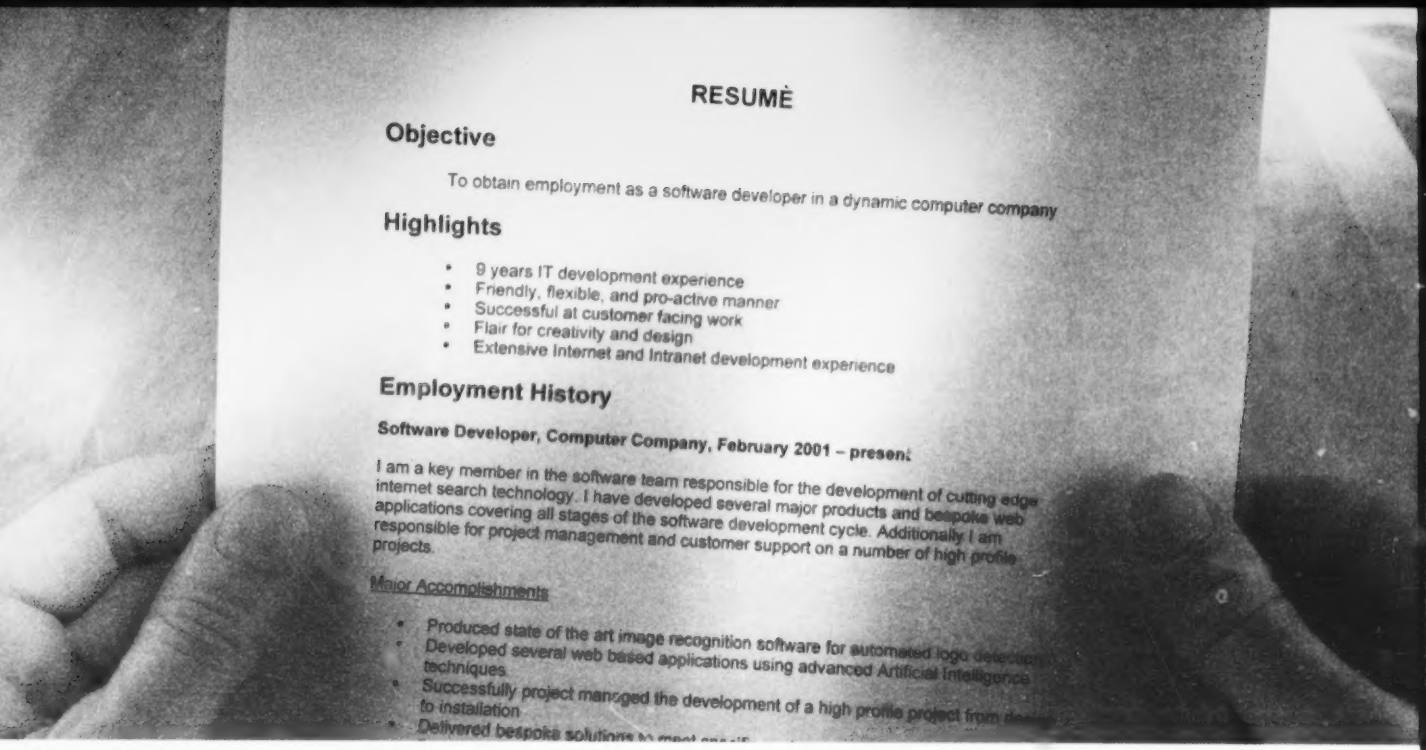
   Save documentation that demonstrates your attendance and/or performance at learning activities. It is important to keep track of papers that indicate you have specific knowledge, skills and abilities so it's a good idea to keep certificates, diplomas, transcripts and related documents in your portfolio.

   It is also important to keep information about other training activities such as workshops, conferences or non-certified courses. Include descriptions, write-ups or brochures about your professional development activities.

4. ***Descriptions of community work.*** Community work includes non-paid work roles in your community. If you have ever belonged to a volunteer organization, served in the community (e.g. through your children) or sat on a committee or board, describe these experiences and include relevant dates and names.

5. ***Support documents.*** Keep any documents that support your work and your educational/training experiences. These include reports or articles you've written, pictures, work samples or records of work samples (e.g. an art portfolio). Support documents can also include forms of personal recognition such as awards, cards and letters thanking you for your services, or articles in newsletters or newspapers about your work.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration



RESUMÈ

Objective

To obtain employment as a software developer in a dynamic computer company

Highlights

- 9 years IT development experience
- Friendly, flexible, and pro-active manner
- Successful at customer facing work
- Flair for creativity and design
- Extensive Internet and Intranet development experience

Employment History

Software Developer, Computer Company, February 2001 – present

I am a key member in the software team responsible for the development of cutting edge internet search technology. I have developed several major products and bespoke web applications covering all stages of the software development cycle. Additionally I am responsible for project management and customer support on a number of high profile projects.

Major Accomplishments

- Produced state of the art image recognition software for automated logo detection
- Developed several web based applications using advanced Artificial Intelligence techniques
- Successfully project managed the development of a high profile project from design to installation
- Delivered bespoke solutions to meet specific

6. ***Relationships.*** Keep track of people you know personally and professionally who can help you in your educational or work activities. They may be people who have specific types of knowledge or information, past employers who will act as references for you, or people who give you information and/or emotional support.

7. ***Marketing materials.*** These are materials such as
   - an up-to-date resumé
   - a one-page description of your services that you can hand out to people (e.g. while searching for work or preparing for a work/educational assignment)
   - a brochure about your services (this is more important if you are self-employed)
   - a curriculum vitae (CV), if you are in an academic field, which includes a list of your speeches, published materials, teaching and lecturing assignments, etc. This is important if employers will want to see evidence that you have made contributions to your profession.

Remember—for it to continue to be useful, you must keep the information in your portfolio up-to-date.

The method you choose to store this information should reflect your organizational style, the time you are prepared to devote to maintaining your portfolio, and your material resources (e.g. whether or not you have access to a computer). You can use one of the following methods or create a system of your own. However you choose to do it, remember that the purpose of keeping track of your personal assets is to make your trip easier as you progress down your career path.

To keep track of information, you need

- a record-keeping system
- a storage system

For more information on portfolios, visit **alis.alberta.ca/tips**. Select Search by Topic, Under Employment, and click on About Portfolios.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Record-Keeping System

The simplest record-keeping system is to write information relating to your personal assets in a notebook or binder. You could have different sections for different types of information. Or you can use a computer to keep track of information. You can arrange your information in many ways. For example, to record your personal assets, you could

- create one long list (easiest to create, but difficult to apply to particular situations)
- categorize your list according to passion and purpose, personal characteristics, skills and abilities, and/or personal resources
- categorize your list by theme (e.g. communication skills, physical skills)
- order your assets by level of complexity
- arrange your assets by preference

Storage System

If your organizational style fits into the utterly disorganized, short of time category, you can use a box and keep it in an easy-to-access location. Make a habit of adding information and documentation to the box whenever appropriate. It may not be the most elegant system, but at least it's a start!

If you are willing to invest a little more time and effort (so you'll be able to locate information more quickly when you want it), try developing a system that allows you to categorize and organize your information. Many people use expanding files, binders or scrapbooks. Others prefer to use their computer to set up an electronic portfolio where they store their scanned or electronic documents.

Select an option that is as easy for you as possible—you'll be more likely to use it. Remember, it's the maintenance of your portfolio that will make it more effective over time.

Conclusion

When you have completed your Personal Assets Summary and set up a portfolio, the next logical question is "What do I do with it?"

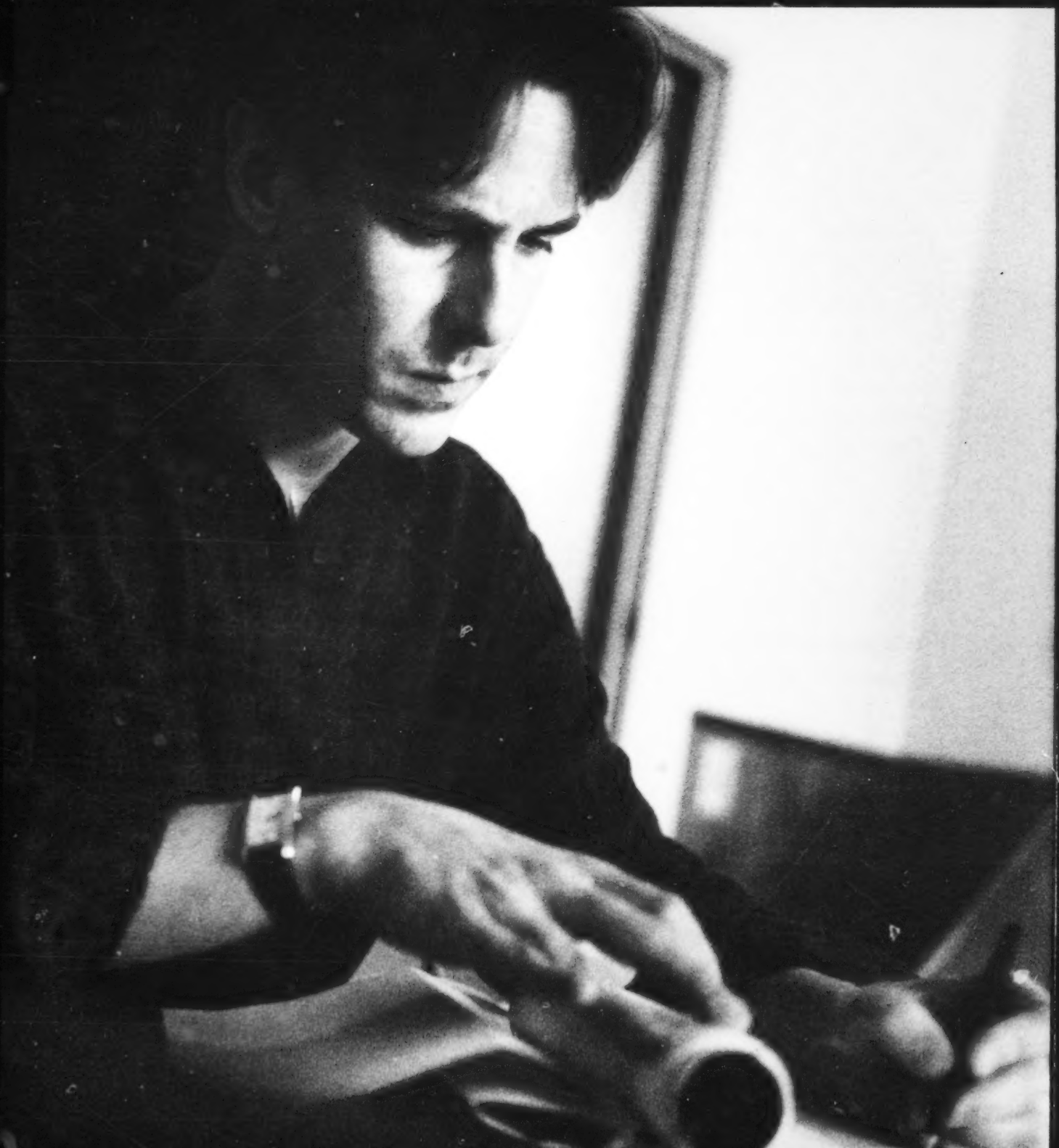
The answer depends on your needs and circumstances. For example, if you are looking for work and need to prepare a resumé, the information in your portfolio can be a big help. And, when you have a job interview, you can review your personal assets to remind yourself about the many assets you have to offer.

If you are looking at a career change, you're in a much better position to translate your hidden credentials into a career move now that you know where your strengths lie.

If you have worked through the activities in this book, you've undoubtedly discovered (or, perhaps, rediscovered) that you have many, many assets. Whatever the future brings, you can package and repackage your assets whenever you need to adapt to new circumstances.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Personal Assets Summary



Activity

Skills Sampler

SEE PAGE 12

Transferable Skills
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Personal Management Skills
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Occupational/Work Profiles

SEE PAGE 17

Type of work: _____

Knowledge, skills and abilities I *have*
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Knowledge, skills and abilities I *need*
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Type of work: _____

Knowledge, skills and abilities I *have*
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Knowledge, skills and abilities I *need*
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Activity

I Know Someone Who...

SEE PAGE 22

Qualities I have
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Qualities I would like to develop
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Storytelling

SEE PAGE 24

Personal Characteristics	Supporting Examples
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

5 Life Influences

SET PAGE 26

Influence of gender	1) 2) 3)
Influence of ethnic/cultural/ religious background	1) 2) 3)
Influence of surrounding conditions and events	1) 2) 3)
Influence of learning experiences	1) 2) 3)

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Resources And Riches

SEE PAGE 32

Unique Life Experiences
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Educational/Training Activities
Formal education (list courses, certificates, diplomas, degrees)
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Training institutes or private sector training
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Workshops
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Conferences
1.
2.

Activity #6: Resources And Riches (continued)

3.
4.
5.
Work site training
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Supports And Networks
Personal
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Professional
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Community
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Material Resources

Financial Resources			$ Value
Assets	Bank account(s)		
	Investment(s)		
	Housing		
	Property		
	Vehicle(s)		
	Other		
Expenses	Short-term expenses (e.g. rent, utilities, credit cards)		
	Long-term expenses (e.g. mortgage, loans)		

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

The Loves Of Your Life

SEE PAGE 36

Themes and other insights
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

Activity

Gazing Into The Crystal Ball

SEE PAGE 39

My top five wishes	Why?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration

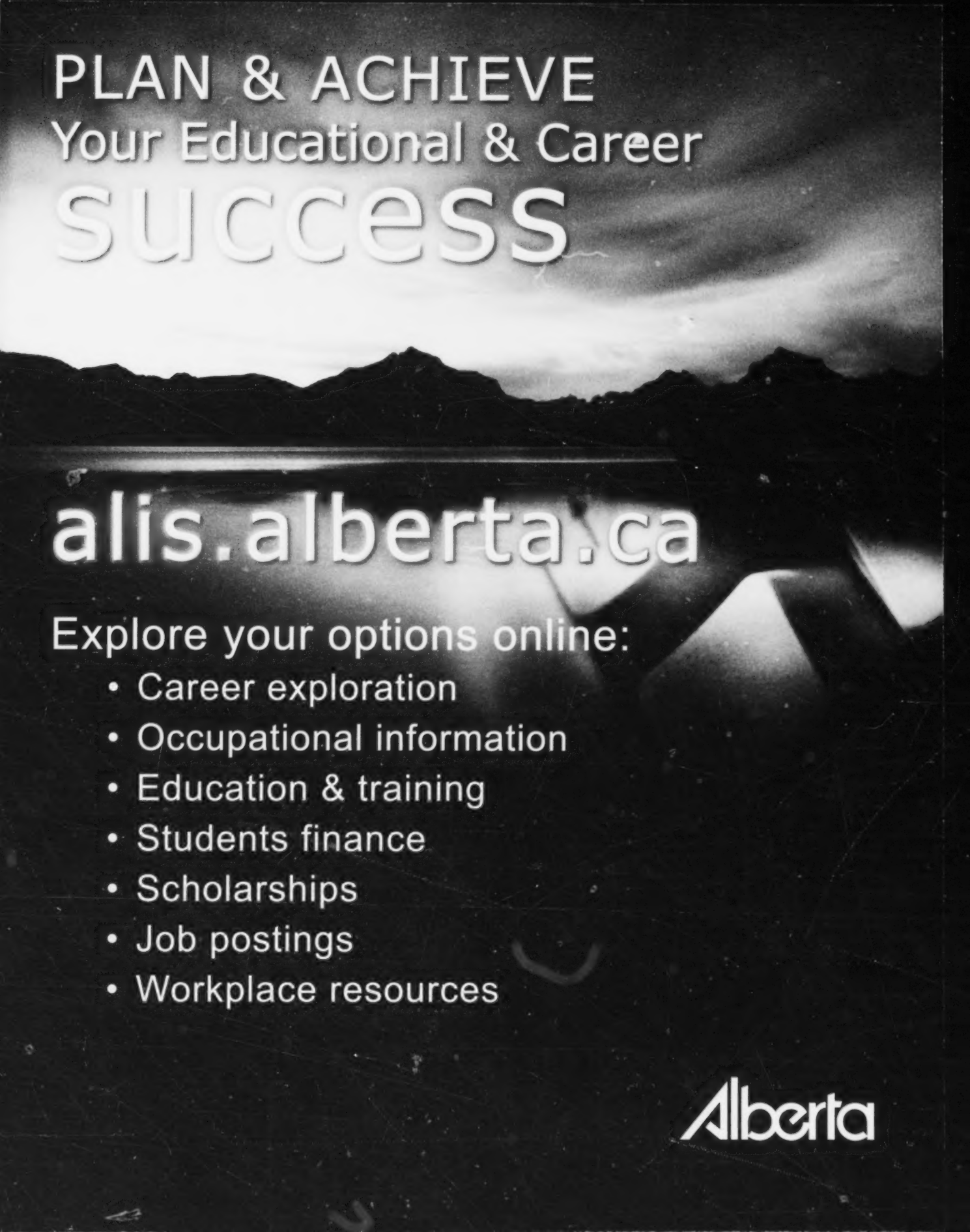
Activity

The Life I Want

SEE PAGE 40

Setting	Work
Leisure	**Relationships**
Immediate Goals	**Long-Term Goals**
Assets I have that will help me meet my goals	**Assets I need to acquire to meet my goals**

© Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration


PLAN & ACHIEVE
Your Educational & Career
success
alis.alberta.ca
Explore your options online:
• Career exploration
• Occupational information
• Education & training
• Students finance
• Scholarships
• Job postings
• Workplace resources
Alberta

Assessing You

The First Step in Career Planning

Thinking about a career change?

Before you can decide what you want to *do*, you first have to discover who you *are*.

Assessing You will help you with this self-assessment—the first step of the career planning process. This publication will guide you through many activities that will help you identify your knowledge, skills, abilities, personal characteristics and resources. This will, in turn, help you decide which occupations are the best match for you.

alis.alberta.ca

CAREER PLANNING • EDUCATION • JOBS

›› Make the most of your future